
THE
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UTRUM HORUM?

MR. COOKE? or the MANAGER?

PART the SECOND.

AT length, after an absence of several weeks, Mr. Cooke has returned, on Monday, the 19th. instant, to the discharge of his professional duty. The cause of his *protracted* absence from the Metropolis, *subsequent* to the opening night, has already been satisfactorily accounted for. The official intelligence of the sudden and severe indisposition, with which he was attacked at Newcastle, on the very night that Covent Garden theatre opened, attested by gentlemen of character and professional repute, leaves not the smallest room for doubt or cavil, as to the fact of his compulsory detention, in the *second* instance. But the *primary* and *original* proposition—the question: “Why he was not in town to perform

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form his duty in the *morning* of that very day, the *night* of which proved so disastrous to him at Newcastle."—still remained at issue, and totally unexplained. As a being, subject like ourselves, to the infirmities of human nature, and "all the numerous ills, that flesh is heir to"—Mr. Cooke cannot be held responsible for contingencies, over which he possesses no controul. But we still adhere to the position, or rather the self-evident axiom we advanced in a former number—that no calamity which befalls Mr. Cooke at Newcastle in the *Evening*, however serious and afflicting, can be admitted in apology for his not being at his post in London, on the *morning*!

Hence it necessarily follows, that the main point, to which public enquiry must naturally be directed, and respecting which they possessed a just and inherent claim to explanation, must distinctly and immediately involve the *first* and original transgression. The whole enquiry resolves itself into this plain and palpable proposition. "With whom lies the blame?" "Whether is MR. COOKE guilty, or the MANAGER?" "Whether has the MANAGER neglected to *summon* the attendance of MR. COOKE? or has MR. COOKE neglected to *obey* that summons? Has he treated the requisition on his services with contempt and contumacy? Or has the MANAGER, by any *previous* and *private* arrangement—(this case we state broadly and explicitly, as it has been broadly and explicitly asserted by the advocates of MR. COOKE, that such an arrangement had actually taken place) waved his right and demand on MR. COOKE's attendance? Had MR. COOKE the means and opportunity of knowing, that his services would be wanting, or had he *not*?"

This, then, we conceive to be the sole and immediate point at issue. To the elucidation of this question, therefore, any Apology or Statement from MR. COOKE must principally

cipally and directly refer. Let us examine now, in how far MR. COOKE has fairly met the question?—in how far he has either acquitted himself, or implicated the MANAGER?—in how far he has shifted the load of responsibility and censure from his *own* shoulders, upon those of his *employers*?

For the more effectual accomplishment of this desirable object, we shall give, as accurately as circumstances will permit, a transcript of his *Apology*, accompanied with such remarks and comments, as naturally spring out of the premises, and offer themselves to our especial animadversion. That we may not, in the execution of this design, incur the imputation of partiality, and with the view of precluding even a pretext for cavil and objection, we shall not confine ourselves to the *Report* of any *one* individual Paper—but adduce the corroboratory evidence of no less than three witnesses—and present our readers with the testimony entered on record by three different umpires in the dispute—selecting for this purpose those papers, which have entered most fully into the detail, and appear to approximate nearest, not merely to the spirit and substance; but to the very letter of Mr. Cooke's speech. These are the *True-Briton*—the *Oracle*—and the *Morning Chronicle*.

The following is a copy of MR. COOKE'S *Apology*, as stated in the *True-Briton*:

“ LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

It is with extreme concern, that I feel myself under the *just necessity* of apologizing to you on the first night that I have the honour of appearing before you. I certainly had *not obtained leave to be absent*; but had strong reason so expect, that I should not be wanted in town at the very beginning of the season; and I did not receive any summons for that purpose. A letter was, indeed, sent from

the Theatre; but was directed to me at Manchester after I had left it; and did not *reach* me at Newcastle, till it was impossible for me, with the utmost exertion, to arrive in London time enough to appear upon the opening of the season. With the events, which have since happened, you are sufficiently acquainted. I earnestly trust, that you will have the goodness to excuse this involuntary failure. I may not be worthy your kind protection; but it shall always be my anxious endeavour to deserve it."

The *Oracle*, which will be found to deviate very slightly (and that merely in a few *verbal* distinctions, which in no wise affect the general tendency and palpable meaning) from the preceding *Report*—gives us the subjoined account:

"LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

It is with the most painful sensation, that on the first night of my appearance this season, I am obliged to offer you my apology. It is, however, incumbent upon me to state, that *I had no permission to absent myself on the opening of the theatre*; but from *some* information, which I too *fatally* relied on! I had reason to think, that my presence would not be necessary. The letter which was dispatched, requiring my immediate attendance, arrived at Manchester some time after my departure, and from a very *blameable inattention*, reached me at a time, when it was impossible, with my utmost exertions, to gratify your wishes by the discharge of my duty. I regret most sincerely your disappointment. What afterwards happened to me, I presume you all know. I now solicit your kind indulgence, and beg leave to assure you, that however I may fail of success, I shall most earnestly use my best endeavours to obtain your approbation."

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The *Morning Chronicle*, as far as involves the spirit and substance, is completely to the same effect, and runs thus :

“ LADIES and GENTLEMEN,

It is with the most painful concern, that I find myself under the painful necessity of apologizing to you the very first night, on which I appear before you for the season. When I left London, I had *not received permission to be absent at the opening of the theatre*. From some circumstances, however, which it is *unnecessary* to mention, I *imagined*, that my attendance might be dispensed with, without inconvenience. The letter, which summoned me to town, was directed to Manchester, after I had left the place, and *when* it reached me, I found, that it was utterly impossible to comply with its request. With the events, which have happened to me since, I believe you are already sufficiently acquainted.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I can only say, that I am heartily sorry for the disappointment I occasioned to you, and that I am animated with the sincerest desire to promote your amusement, and to gain your favour. I may *fail* of success ; but no exertions, on my part, shall be wanting to *deserve* it.”

To the above *Reports*, we might add the testimonials of the residue of our diurnal prints, (all of which perfectly coincide and tally with each other in all leading points ; though they may not enter so fully and so completely into the recapitulation) were it necessary to multiply proofs, and would the limits of our publication admit. It is not from any pre-disposing bias, that we have given the preference to the *True Briton*, the *Oracle*, and the *Morning Chronicle* ; but because these papers have more closely adhered to the specific wording of Mr. Cooke’s *apology*, and have more faithfully and more circumstantially *detailed* his speech. This indeed constitutes the sole difference between
them

them and their co-temporaries. In every other respect, they most inveterately agree.

Proceed we now to comment on the foregoing statement of the case, as given by Mr. Cooke himself. We have already remarked, that the principal plea, on which the advocates and partizans of that gentleman endeavour to rest and build their exculpation of his conduct, hinges on the assertion, that he had received express assurance from the managers, that his services would not be required for a certain period subsequent to the opening of the theatre; and that permission had, in consequence, been granted to him to absent himself, during that term, from the metropolis, in order to avail himself with the greater profit and success of any country engagement he might think proper to form and enter into. This assertion we have heard most peremptorily advanced and insisted upon. Certain of our public prints, likewise, have confidently repeated it as an established fact. Nor is the anxiety with which the patrons of Mr. COOKE have laboured to propagate and gain credit to this report, or the avidity with which his friends have seized upon it, in the least degree to be wondered at. This important point once ascertained and duly substantiated, Mr. COOKE stands *ipso facto* acquitted of all blame. The responsibility then reverts from his shoulders to those of the MANAGER. Then is the MANAGER, not Mr. COOKE, the fit object of censure—then stands the MANAGER, not Mr, COOKE, convicted and amenable to public justice.

But what says MR. COOKE on this important subject? In what light does his *Apology* place the business? Does his *Statement* give any plausibility, any colouring to the Report? Does *he* countenance the assertion? Does *he* advance proof in support of it?—Directly the reverse!—He tells us, as represented in the *True-Briton*, that he “cer-
“tainly

“tainly had *not* obtained leave to be *absent*.” In the *Oracle* he says “It is incumbent upon me to state, that I had *not* “permission to *absent* myself.” Precisely to the same effect is the statement in the *Morning Chronicle*: “When I left “London, I did *not* receive permission to be absent at the “opening of the Theatre.” Can any thing be more explicit? Can the most sceptical reader any longer entertain a doubt upon the subject? Can the most zealous of his friends, without implicating their own judgment, and calling in question MR. COOKE’S veracity, any longer affect to justify his conduct, by throwing the blame upon the MANAGER?

But, though Mr. COOKE’S own statement most unequivocally acquits the MANAGER of all collusion, all participation in his neglect of duty, whether voluntary or not—let us not suffer ourselves to be hurried away by the tide of prejudice—let us not, because the innocence of one party is established, proceed, as a matter of course, to pass sentence on the other, without a hearing. It is very possible, in a case where two parties are at variance, for the one to be in the right, without thereby absolutely inferring the guilt of the other. Both may have equally acted uprightly, and the difference between them may be attributable to mere accident, to mistake, or, haply, to the misconduct of a third person. That Mr. COOKE was absent, *without permission*, appears evident from his own avowal. But it does not, therefore, follow, that he *willfully* neglected his duty. Haply, he had no possible means of knowing *when* the theatre would open! Haply, he never saw the play of *Richard the Third* advertised in the papers! Haply, it never struck him, that the period was fast approaching, at which the London theatres are wont to commence the winter campaign! Haply, none of the acquaintance, with whom he associated in the country, ever had the curiosity to look into a London paper!—never told him

him that his name was announced in the bills for *Richard!* Haply, neither to Manchester nor to Newcastle, does a London Newspaper ever find its way! Haply, Mr. COOKE never enters an inn; never frequents a *public house*, or any place of similar description, where Newspapers are wont to be taken in for general perusal! Haply, it never occurred to him, that it was his duty to be upon the watch, to make enquiry, and to hold himself in readiness, as the period for the re-opening of the winter theatres approached! Haply, he did not feel himself in the smallest degree interested in the event!!!

The reader will perceive with what extreme solicitude we labour to establish the propriety of MR. COOKE's conduct, to vindicate him from the charge of remissness, and of breach of duty, and to justify him in the eye of the public at large. But we have a stronger plea in favour of MR. COOKE, than mere *suppositions*. Not only was MR. COOKE *not* aware, that his services would be wanted; but he had even *strong reasons*, we are told, to believe the contrary. In the *True-Briton* Report, MR. COOKE is made to say: "I had *strong reasons* to expect, that I should *not* be wanted in town at the very beginning of the season." In the *Oracle* he says: "From some information, which I too *fatally!* relied on (this is an important passage, on which we shall comment anon) "I had reason to think, that my presence would *not* be necessary!" In the *Morning Chronicle* we are told: "From some circumstances, which it is *unnecessary!* (this forms another weighty sentence) "to mention, I *imagined*, that my attendance might be dispensed with, *without inconvenience.*"

Well-wishers as we are to all mankind, and anxiously desirous to see all men support the character of fair and upright dealing, it glads us most devoutly to find, that MR. COOKE did not on this occasion, *wantonly*, much less *wilfully*

wilfully absent himself from his duty. The charge of malversation, on the part of the Manager, being completely done away by Mr. Cooke's explicit avowal—"that he had "no permission from the Theatre to be absent on the opening "night"—the only point now at issue between the public and the theatre hinged entirely on the solution of this plain simple question: "Did the disappointment, occasioned by "Mr. Cooke's absence, originate in *wilful*, or in *accidental* "error? Did Mr. Cooke *knowingly*, and *contumaciously* "absent himself?—or was he led into an *involuntary* mis- "take?"—

In reply to these very pertinent and important questions, Mr. COOKE expressly declares, that, so far from *trifling* with the public; so far from *wantonly* disappointing them, he had *strong reasons* to conclude that he should *not* be wanted. That certain *information* to that effect, (see the Report in the *Oracle*) had been given him:—that *circumstances* had arisen, which *warranted* the belief, that his presence would *not* be necessary! Here, then, our attention is excited to the utmost, and expectation wound up to the highest pitch. On the developement of these "*strong reasons*,"—on the specification of this curious "*information on, which he so fatally relied!*"—on the exposition of these "*circumstances, which led him to imagine, that his services would NOT be wanted*,"—on a fair and candid statement of these points depended, either his *condemnation*, or *acquittal*. On these points, therefore, Mr. COOKE would naturally be expected most explicitly to dilate. Satisfactory and conclusive proof would naturally be looked for, in support of allegations of such momentous consequence. In how far does Mr. COOKE, in this respect, meet the public expectation?—meet what every member of the audience had a right, a most legitimate and incontrovertible right, to demand from him?—

In direct and flagrant violation of every fair and rational principle—in immediate opposition to established rule and usage, instead of proceeding to *proof*, he contents himself with mere *assertion*—offers *no evidence*; nay more, skulks and shrinks from the very discussion, which himself provoked! He acknowledges, that great inconvenience has resulted from his absence! acknowledges that much and serious disappointment has been occasioned to the public!—that the interests of the theatre have been pre-eminently compromised and endangered!—In fine, that the evil, accruing from his conduct, is of so momentous a nature, that *apology* on his part, is rendered indispensibly necessary. Yet, at the very moment, that he makes this avowal—at the very moment, that he endeavours to palliate his conduct, he declines entering into an explanation of the very grounds, on which he professes to rest his defence. He appeals to a certain untoward combination of events—a certain unfortunate association of circumstances, which he contends, exculpate him from blame—yet at the same time gravely tells us, with most consummate effrontery and command of face, that all further explanation is needless—that “*these are circumstances which it is altogether unnecessary to mention!*” Is it possible for imagination to conceive a more *cavalier* and *insulting* mode of defence?—a more lame and impotent conclusion?

Still further to increase our expectation, and enhance the weight of disappointment, he adds that the information he received was of a nature so peculiar and so momentous, that his reliance on it was *fatal*!—that this it was, which proved the *death-blow* to all his wishes and endeavours to fulfill his duty, and prove his gratitude to his patrons and employers! Surely, where events of such magnitude attached to any specific circumstance the statement of that circumstance, must be a matter of the most indispensable necessity. However, as Mr. Cooke has not condescended to satisfy public curiosity on this point, we shall take upon ourselves to perform this office, for him in our next.

THEA.

THEATRICAL RETROSPECT.

DRURY-LANE.

1801.

OCTOBER.

- Thursday, 15. The Belles' Stratagem, *Mrs. Cowley*—The Deserter, *C. Dibdin*;
 Saturday, 17. Artaxerxes, *Dr. Arne*—The Mock Doctor, *H. Fielding*;
 Monday, 19. Richard the Third, *Shakespeare*—Blue-Beard, *G. Colman*
 Tuesday, 20. Bold Stroke for a Wife, *Mrs. Centlivre*—Lodoiska, *J. P. Kemble*.
 Wednesday, 21. Pizarro, *R. B. Sherridan*—The Virgin Unmask'd, *H. Fielding*.
 Thursday, 22. Artaxerxes, *Dr. Arne*—Who's the Dupe? *Mrs. Cowley*.

COVENT-GARDEN.

1801

OCTOBER.

- Thursday, 15.* Speed the Plough, *Morton*—Paul and Virginia, *Cobb*.
 Friday, 16. Lover's Vows, *Mrs. Inchbald*—The Escapes;
 Monday, 19. Richard the Third, *Shakspeare*—The Escapes.
 Tuesday, 20. Artaxerxes, *Dr. Arne*—Lover's Quarrels.
 Wednesday, 21. The Merchant of Venice, *Shakespeare*—Love-a-la-Mode, *MacKlin*.

* The above Performances were substituted this evening, in lieu of *Artaxerxes*, and *Lover's Quarrels*, in consequence of the alledged indisposition of *Mrs. Billington*.

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The length to which our strictures on Mr. Cooke's *Apology* have unavoidably extended, compel us to adopt curtailment in this department of our work. Fortunately, it so happens, that there is little or no occasion for expansion.

For the same reason, we are under the necessity of confining our remarks on Covent Garden to a review of

THE ESCAPES; or the WATER-CARRIER.

A new musical Entertainment, in three acts, under this title, was produced at *Covent Garden Theatre*, on Wednesday, October 14, for the first time. It is understood to be a translation from the French; but whoever has achieved the task of translating and adapting it to the English stage, has had the *modesty*, or rather the *good sense* (for its reception, as well as character, is certainly such as can render no man of rational feeling ambitious of being deemed the author) to conceal his name.

The following is a list of the

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Count Armand,	—	Mr. INCLEDON.
Michelli,	—	Mr. FAWCETT.
Antonio, his son,	—	Mr. TOWNSEND.
Daniel Michelli grandfather to Antonio,	}	Mr. SIMMONS.
First Officer of the Guard,		
Semos, the father of Angelina,		Mr. ATKINS.
Constantia,	—	Miss DIXON.
Angelina,	—	Miss HOWELL.
Marcellina Michelli,	—	Miss WHEATLEY.

The plot or fable of the piece is of a texture so extremely flimsy, as to supersede the necessity of lengthened detail; *Count Armand*, President of the Parliament of Paris, incurs the

the resentment of *Cardinal Mazarine*, by his manly and virtuous opposition of the measures pursued by that arbitrary Minister. He is in consequence denounced, as an enemy to the State, and a reward of six thousand crowns proclaimed for his apprehension. *Michelli*, a blunt, honest water-carrier affords him an asylum in his house ; but *Armand* scarcely enters, before a party of soldiers demand admittance with a search warrant. In this extremity, *Michelli* puts *Armand* to bed, where he passes him off for his sick and aged father *Daniel*. *Constantia*, the President's wife, equipped in the disguise of a Savoyard girl, personates his daughter *Marcellina*. The soldiers are preparing to depart, when *Antonio* abruptly enters the room, and by his awkwardness and confusion nearly leads to a discovery. *Michelli*, however, contrives an opportunity of putting him on his guard, and the party soon afterwards withdraw, satisfied that the object of their search is not in the house.

At the time that the soldiers entered *Michelli's* habitation, his son, *Antonio* was gone to the Police office, to procure passports for himself, and his sister *Marcellina*, to repair to a neighbouring village, where *Antonio's* marriage was to be celebrated the next day with *Angelina*. Of this circumstance *Michelli* resolves to avail himself, in order to facilitate the escape of *Arnaud*, and his wife. The latter accompanies *Antonio*, as the representative of his sister ; but is stopped at the barrier, the description in the passport not perfectly coinciding with her personal characteristics. After some difficulties, the officer of the guard, who had seen her in *Michelli's* house, and concludes the difference between her person and the description given in the passport to have originated in mistake, suffers her to pursue her journey.

Meanwhile that this point is adjusting, *Michelli* makes his appearance with his water-tub, which he draws on a kind of sledge. He falls into familiar discourse with the soldiers ;

soldiers; insists that the girl whose identity they are disputing, is his daughter, and thus at length obtains permission for her to proceed. He then prepares to follow her with his water-tub; but is prevented by the sentinel, strict orders having been issued by the Cardinal, not to admit any carriage whatever through the barrier. Thus disappointed in his original scheme—he has recourse to a second artifice—and under the pretence of giving information to the guard respecting the place of *Armand's* concealment, sends them on an hopeless errand—The sentinel alone remains, and whilst he is pacing his round, *Michelli* opens a secret aperture in the tub, and accomplishes *Armand's* escape.

We are now presented with a rural view, in the vicinity of Genesle, where *Angelina*, the bride of *Antonio* resides. Festivities and rejoicings take place in celebration of their marriage, but are interrupted by the arrival of a party of soldiers, who have orders to search the neighbourhood in quest of *Armand*. The only chance this persecuted gentleman has now left of eluding their vigilance is by concealing himself in a hollow tree. He has not long taken his post, before two of the soldiers seat themselves at the foot of the tree, to regale themselves. Whilst they are thus employed, *Angelina* approaches with some refreshments in a basket. The soldiers, who had previously noticed her beauty, and only waited for an opportunity of gratifying their desires, rush upon her, and prepare to offer violence. *Armand*, who is a witness of the transaction, bursts from his concealment, presents a pistol in each hand, and rescues his wife. The alarm is instantly given—the whole party fall forth—*Armand* is recognised, and on the eve of being carried off a prisoner, when in this critical moment, *Michelli* rushes on the stage, as the messenger of glad tidings,—with a pardon from the Queen. *Armand* is, of course, set at liberty, and

and the piece concludes, after the customary fashion, with singing and dancing.

Connected with the main story, is a little episode, which possesses some degree of merit. In affording his protection to *Armand, Michelli*, unconscious to himself, is serving a benefactor—the very man, who on a former occasion, rescued his son. This circumstance is related in a song (the only one, in the whole entertainment, though a musical piece) which we subjoin. It is sung by Townsend, in the character of *Antonio*, and as a ballad, is not an unpleasing composition, if the author had paid more attention to the chastenels of his rhymes. Ballads should be simple, we grant; but there is a wide and essential difference between *simplicity* and *negligence*; between *ease* and *sloveliness*.

S O N G.

MR. TOWNSEND.

I.

A little boy, a Savoyard,
With cold and hunger almost dying,
Among the rocks and mountains lost,
For parents, home, and house was crying:
A stranger, from the distant road,
Who heard him weep, and saw him wander,
No longer suffer'd him to saunter—
Good deeds are never ill-bestow'd!

II.

He gave the little boy his hand,
And dry'd his tears, and hush'd his sorrow,
And said such gentle things and kind,
I could not tell them by to-morrow!

He

He brought him to his lost abode,
His mother dear, whose heart was *breaking*;
And left his purse with friendly *greeting*—
Good deeds are never ill bestow'd!

III:

This little boy became a man,
And cruel wars again were waging,
The stranger to the battle went,
And fell, where sword and fire were raging,
The Savoyard before him strode,
And by his bold and brave behaviour,
With noble valour sav'd his saviour—
Good deeds are never ill bestow'd!

[to be continued.]

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